

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Cancelled).

2. (Previously Cancelled).

2
3. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, comprising heating said ~~liquid~~ aqueous solution to a temperature of about 45-80°C prior to said contacting.

3
4. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said contacting comprises spraying said aqueous solution ~~liquid~~ into contact with said suspended fine solid particles.

4
5. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said aqueous solution ~~liquid~~ contains ~~a minor portion of~~ an excipient, an active ingredient and/or other sweetener than xylitol.

5
6. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 5~~, wherein a secondary spray of ~~a another~~ liquid containing an excipient, an active ingredient and/or other sweetener than xylitol is simultaneously provided.

6
7. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said removal of ~~said the water~~ solvent is performed by the introduction of a drying gas heated to a temperature of about 55-170°C.

7
6
8. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 7 ~~claim 7~~, wherein said water solvent removal provides a xylitol material dried to a free moisture content of about 0.1 to 3% while said xylitol material is still in a suspended state.

10
1
9. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said conditioning is maintained so as to allow xylitol microcrystallization to proceed in said composition.

9
11
10. (Currently Amended): A process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said xylitol composition is allowed to settle on a moving belt and to form thereon a substantially continuous agglomerated porous powder layer having a thickness of about 0.5 – 5 cm.

12
11
11. (Previously Amended): The process according to claim 10 wherein said conditioning includes treating said composition in said agglomerated layer with a drying gas having a temperature of about 50-100°C, for a time of about 10-180 minutes.

13
12
12. (Original): The process according to claim 11, wherein said conditioning is performed in several successive steps with decreasing drying gas temperatures.

14
12
13. (Previously Amended): The process according to claim 11, which further comprises cooling said conditioned agglomerated layer to provide a substantially flat porous and brittle plate comprising microcrystalline xylitol.

15
13
~~14.~~ (Previously Amended): The process according to claim ~~12~~, comprising subjecting said plate to a ~~mild~~ comminuting action so as to break up said agglomerated layer.

14
1
~~15.~~ (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, which further comprises fractionating microcrystalline xylitol particles and recirculating at least a portion thereof to provide a feed of said fine solid particles containing microcrystalline xylitol.

17
16
16
~~16.~~ (Previously Amended): The process according to claim ~~15~~, comprising recovering microcrystalline xylitol particles having a mean particle size of about 0.1 – 10 mm.

18
1
~~17.~~ (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein about 30-70%, ~~preferably about 50—80%~~ of the dried xylitol composition ~~dry substance~~ derives from a said feed of solid microcrystalline particles.

19
1
~~18.~~ (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said solid particles are retained in a fluidized state until they have grown to predetermined weight.

20
1
~~19.~~ (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, comprising recirculating microcrystalline xylitol particles having a mean particle size below about 0.2 mm.

21
20. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, comprising processing said microcrystalline xylitol optional excipients, carriers and/or active ingredients into a pharmaceutical or oral hygiene product.

22
21. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, comprising processing said microcrystalline xylitol into a tablet with optional excipients, carriers and/or active ingredients by direct compression.

23
22. (Previously Amended): The processing according to claim 19 ~~claim 1~~, comprising processing said microcrystalline xylitol into a chewing gum by mixing with conventional chewing gum ingredients.

23. – 39. (Previously Cancelled).

24
40. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said ~~liquid is~~ an aqueous solution of xylitol has ~~having~~ a xylitol concentration of 50 – 77% by weight.

25
41. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, comprising heating said aqueous solution ~~liquid~~ to a temperature of about 55 – 70°C prior to said contacting.

26
42. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said removal of said the water solvent is performed by the introduction of a drying gas heating to a temperature of about 80 - 150°C.

27
43. (Currently Amended): The process according to Claim 57 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said removal of said solvent is performed by the introduction of a drying gas heated to a temperature of about 90 - 130°C.

8
44. (Previously Added): The process according to Claim ~~7~~ ⁶, wherein said drying gas is air.

9
45. (Previously Added): The process according to claim ~~7~~ ⁶, wherein said solvent removal provides a xylitol material dried to a free moisture content below 1% while said xylitol material is still in a suspended state.

71
46. - 56.: (Previously Cancelled).

1
57. (New): A process for the crystallization of xylitol comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting an aqueous solution of xylitol, said xylitol being present in a concentration of between about 30% and about 80% by weight, with gas suspended fine solid particles containing microcrystalline xylitol;

(b) causing substantial removal of the water solvent of said aqueous solution and allowing the resultant xylitol material to form an essentially solid composition of matter comprising a multitude of microcrystals of xylitol; and

UW 2
9/17/03
(c) causing ~~said~~ ^{said} xylitol composition to be conditioned during a further drying step to provide a product consisting essentially throughout its entire structure of a multitude of microcrystals of xylitol agglomerated together in a random manner.